

A GLIMPSE OF AMERICA.



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AMERICA

A  
LECTURE GIVEN AT  
THE LONDON INSTITUTION,

*28th DECEMBER, 1885,*

BY  
BRAM STOKER, M.A.

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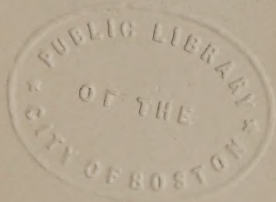
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“AFTER all there’s a great deal of human nature in man.” This conclusion of the great humourist is probably that of every traveller, whose only experiences or impressions of any general interest are those which show the minor developments of human instincts in new surroundings, and under new conditions. We Londoners have opportunities of witnessing, in our daily life, the whole scheme of human existence. We have points of contact with as high a civilization as the earth affords; and also, I fear, with here and there, as complete a system of savagery as distinguished those aborigines who won a place in history by resting on the outside of Captain Cook.

Being cognizant, therefore, of the zenith and the nadir of the star of human progress, and knowing the ultimate limits of which our nature is capable, we must not expect to find in other places, and amongst other peoples, any very startling divergence from our own principles of action, or from the consequences which follow them. I may say, at the outset of my remarks, that I shall not try to convey such crude thoughts as spring from personal comfort or discomfort in strange places and new situations, but shall try to make known the results of the study of points to which my attention was called, consciously or unconsciously, by the incidents of changing life, or from the understanding of conditions of existence new to me. I shall be your eyes and ears in matters on which I found myself ignorant; but shall try to be so with a larger knowledge than I formerly possessed. In fact, I shall ask you to come with my memory, rather than to follow my exact footsteps through a journey in a new land. I shall notice only points of difference, for the similarities are million-fold.

The first impression of America which an average Englishman will experience, will probably be on losing sight of his own shore, and will be one of very great ignorance of the country which he is about to visit.

It is to me, having once visited America, deplorable that we can be left so ignorant of a nation, not merely like ourselves, but ourselves—the same in blood, religion, and social ideas, with an almost identical common law, and with whom our manifold interests are not only vast, but almost vital. I really doubt if the average educated Briton could tell how many States or Territories are in the American Union, the extent of the population, or of the space they spread over, or of the practical conditions under which they live. Such matters as the difference between a State and a Territory, or between National law and State law, are known only to a comparative few, and to the vast majority of us our want of knowledge of the principles and conditions of the executive is ignorance carried to a positive quality. In some ways this ignorance of ours is not only an individual loss, but a national misfortune. The value to us of a widespread and accurate knowledge of a country with which we have so much to do in the way of business, and whose ramifications on lines similar to our own are so vast, is simply immeasurable. A country which contains, in a pretty solid square, lying mainly between the 30 and 50 parallels of North latitude, an area of 3,611,689 square miles, with a population, in 1880, of 50,152,866, with colleges, schools, and asylums to the number of

141,629, with (in 1884) 124,281 miles of railroad, and with 11,403 newspapers and periodicals.

Such figures as these do not, perhaps, carry any distinct idea by themselves, but they may be popularly explained by comparison with home statistics. For instance, New York is nearly as far from San Francisco as from London. While our largest county—Yorkshire—contains 3,882,851 acres, Texas, the largest of the 38 States of the Union, has 170,099,200 acres. Roughly, Texas is as large as France, with Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Greece thrown in, and the scale nicely balanced with the West Riding of Yorkshire. In this vast dominion is a population (in 1880) of 1,591,740, about the same as that of the county of Surrey.

I am anxious that we should have some sort of idea of these things, so that at the start we may get a general idea of the importance to this country of a knowledge of a great community, where every little matter of business or sentiment which can be between two people is multiplied fifty million-fold, so that the drops of individual interest swell into a mighty torrent of good or ill.

I shall try to speak of America as it struck me, in two respects—social and political. I speak entirely without prejudice, and I give a thought simply because it came to me somehow or from some cause.

The social conditions of American life are of

peculiar interest, for in them may be seen by a strange eye, not already jaundiced by prejudice, distinct methods of race development. Naturally, life is more or less regulated by the material conditions of its surroundings. A country which, at its centre of population, has a temperature varying from 20 degrees below zero to 100 above it, must be subject to conditions of social life not possible in more equal temperatures. There are in the United States places where the temperature is equable; but, in the average, there are degrees of heat in summer and cold in winter to which we are strangers. Thus, every arrangement of domestic economy must be made duplicate, to contend opposite evils of heat and cold. To protect life, as well as to ensure comfort, in winter-time every door and window must be capable of being closed hermetically; and to make life bearable in the summer-time there must be cool verandahs and generously-opened doorways, where the burning sunshine cannot penetrate, even by reflection.

The centre of population, as defined formally, is "the point at which equilibrium would be reached, were the country taken as a plane surface, itself without weight, but capable of sustaining weight, and loaded with its inhabitants, in number and position as they are found at the period under consideration, each individual being assumed to be of the same specific

gravity as every other, and, consequently, to exert pressure on the pivotal point directly proportioned to his distance therefrom."

The centre of population is, by the Census of 1880—the latest taken—fixed a few miles from Cincinnati, in the State of Ohio. Here, though in summer the temperature rises to 100° Fahrenheit, two winters ago the ground whilst I was there was frozen six feet deep, and from the thaw along the watershed of the Ohio River the whole country was becoming inundated. The day we left the city the water was rushing over the levees, as they call the banks built to protect the lower lands. A few days later the water had risen to a height of 60 feet over its normal level. The terrible severity of the winters thus often changes abnormally the whole conditions of life. The recurrence of climatic disasters makes a new danger in ordinary life. In cities where the winter is severe, and especially in those of new growth, the imperfect nature of the roadways, and the difficulty of keeping them open, at times renders private traffic difficult and expensive, and tends in part to explain the immense use made all through America of tramcars and public stages of all kinds. With us persons of a certain class think it *infra dignatate* to ride in tramcars, as also to wear overshoes, or to wrap up against the weather; in all these things Americans are quite free, and do not hesitate

to do as they think best. In winter no one dreams of going without overshoes or arctics—boots to cover ordinary boots, made of felt and india-rubber. I have often admired the dexterity and completeness with which all American ladies protect themselves and their clothes from the weather. Overshoes for the feet, a long circular mackintosh reaching almost to the ground, and a veil woven round the hat and covering the face, renders them proof against rain or snow.

The extent of the country has a distinct effect on social life, as it renders long journeys frequent and short journeys necessary. Nothing brings home to me the influence of distances on life so strongly as the way in which the word “road” has come to have a special meaning. With us a road is a carriage-road—“the King’s highway,” as it used to be called—and when we apply it to special purposes we give it a qualifying distinction, such as *railroad*; but in America, where vast distances are opened up by railway enterprise, and where, except in the towns, there are but few roads, as we know them, the word “road” is applied, not by written authority, but by common use to railways, without any qualifying prefix. We hear, with us, of the London Road, the York Road, &c. In America we know the Burlington Road, the Erie Road, &c. It is, perhaps, not so odd that this should be so, when we consider that whilst

in the United Kingdom we had, in 1884, all told, 18,864 miles of railway, the mileage of the United States was 124,281.

A further evidence of the change with regard to highways is that, although American social ideas, habits, and traditions are, in the main, English, our rule of the road is there reversed, and riders and drivers keep the off, or right-hand, side.

An important factor of social change is the inadequacy of domestic service. In a country where a few years of successful toil or enterprise often realizes wealth, there is naturally a desire for workers to seek the most remunerative employment. This is not to be found under the average conditions of household work. Consequent on the scarcity and expense of domestic service, social routine and social appliances are formulated to the simplest possible plan. In fact, the great system of immense residential hotels is a natural growth. These hotels are to be found in every city of the Union. Some of them are of vast extent, being able to supply accommodation for 800 or 1,000 persons. Some of the seaside hotels are of fabulous extent. I believe that in Coney Island, near New York, there are hotels where 10,000 persons can put up. One of these is pointed out as being an example—perhaps the only one—of a building so large as to be able to exemplify with

its rooftree, duly levelled, the curvature of the earth's surface.

For the same reason, the system of houses apportioned in flats, with a common kitchen, and often a common service, have multiplied to a great degree. All through America the major part of domestic service is undertaken by Irish and Negroes, with here and there Germans and Italians, the latter chiefly in restaurants, of which in every city there is a large number. Up to the present time in the United States, domestic service has been regarded as one of the lower orders of work, and it was only within my own experience of the country, beginning in the autumn of 1883, that liveries were to be seen, except at rare intervals, even with carriage servants. I have, several times, heard the fact loudly deplored by Americans, who looked on it as a sign of the waning of that spirit of independence which has hitherto characterized the citizens of the country. Domestic service, and its kindred employment, the police, seem excellently paid, in so far as wages go. In most of the big cities female servants get from £40 to £50 sterling wages, besides excellent living and proper bedrooms, and a much larger measure of personal freedom than at home we are willing to allow. Policemen get large wages, partly, perhaps, due to the fact that they are generally ward

politicians. In New York their pay is about, on the average, \$100 per month, or £240 *per annum*, out of which they have to find their own clothes, which are of the best. I may here remark that all through America men and women of the working classes are much better dressed than at home, and this under the penalizing condition of an import *ad valorem* duty running in cotton from 35 to 50 per cent., in silk 50 per cent. all round, and in woollen from 45 per cent. in the yarn to 90 per cent. in the piece, and when made into clothing 67 per cent.

A traveller, going through the country in the ordinary way, by railways, steamboats, stages, and road-cars, could not possibly distinguish classes as at home, except when they are of very marked difference, or, of course, in the case of tramps, and other excretions of civilization.

The tramp is, in America, a class by himself, tolerated simply for the time. In the vast population of the country there is, of course, a percentage of incurable drones; their number is not many, but they form a dangerous element, since they have no home, and are without the responsibilities which regulate in some degree their fellows; consequently, they are at times treated with ruthless severity, when, for instance, some outrage has been committed, particularly when a woman has been the victim. In the

latter instance, when a negro has been the delinquent, he is almost invariably lynched. In some communities, tramps are warned off, and threatened with being "shot on sight," a summary process of the social law not holding a place in our code.

It is, of course, in the towns that social life is most regulated by conventional standards. America, except in few instances, has not those vast country houses which are studded throughout the Old World. The old order of things of the plantation and slavery period has changed, and the new manifestations of the aristocracy of wealth have not yet been completed. In and around Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore are great houses; but the rule, even in the cases of the wealthiest people, is to have more moderate establishments than would be found with the owners of equal wealth at home. Certainly they have every conceivable comfort and luxury, when such are attainable. Every man builds his own house according to his own wants. The consequence is a general picturesque effect, and the creation of almost a new order of domestic architecture. The American architects are well to the fore, and with the experience of the Old World, and the opportunities of the New, can almost, in the routine of their daily work, indulge their creative artistic tastes. Such men as Richardson, of Boston, and Stanford White,

of New York, are doing work which shall be, in a large measure, a memorial of their age. In the United States are many houses of striking beauty, and many streets where the majority of houses are good, with some notable examples of sound artistic work. Such, for instance, are Beacon Street, Boston, Prairie and Michigan Avenues, Chicago, and North Avenue, Buffalo. Some of the houses in New York are also of great beauty.

The clubs form a very distinct portion of social life. Every city has several. They are, as a rule, large, handsome, and excellently appointed. Their hospitality is unbounded, and the stranger who is properly introduced is made a member for the necessary time with a facility and rapidity which is impossible amongst our denser population. The club in America is, indeed, to the masculine wayfarer the shadow of a great rock in a lone and thirsty land. I often felt chagrin at the thought that we English can never repay in any similar way this expression of American hospitality.

Nearly every one of moderate means has some country or seaside residence. It may be small, but it is the absolute possession of the owner, and is at present easily obtainable. I have known a player in the orchestra of a theatre who had his cottage in the country, bought with and supported by his own

savings. This possession of real estate is in every way fostered and encouraged by the policy of the United States. Land is supposed to be held for useful purposes, and its transfer is exceedingly cheap and simple. A few hours and a few dollars can transfer a whole estate.

In his message to Congress on the 8th of December, 1885, President Cleveland crystallized into a few sentences the public feeling with regard to land: "It is not," he said, "for the common benefit of the United States that a large area of the public land should be acquired, directly, or through fraud, into the hands of a single individual. As far as practicable the plan adopted in the disposal of the public lands should have in view the original policy, which encouraged many purchasers of these lands for homes, and discouraged the massing of large areas."

This was said with reference to the Public Domain, which is the great reserve of lands in various parcels, disposable, as thought desirable, by the Federal Government of the United States; but of course such a public policy was the outcome of public needs, and of the experience of individuals and of controlling local powers, and may, therefore, be taken as evidence of the existing public sentiment.

The habit and facility, then, of acquiring freehold encourages the building everywhere of residences for

personal use, and affects, not only the design of the house, but the quality of the labour and the material used. It seemed to me that everywhere the constructive work is admirably done. The work of the stonemasons is really sound and good, and the plumbing is of the best. Work of each of these kinds is expensive, the latter specially so. They have a caustic saying in some places, that if you get the plumbers into your house, even for repairs, it is better for you to offer the entire freehold in liquidation of the debt rather than to undertake to pay the bill.

Amongst the conveniences and facilities of life, springing from the highly-developed organization of a limited supply of service, I may mention the fire brigade. In America fire brigades are even more necessary than with us, partly because there are still so many wooden houses, and partly because there is a special danger arising from the necessity of indoor warmth. Where the cold is intense it is necessary to maintain much heat within doors, a practice, by the way, which, to our differently-schooled powers of sensation, seems overdone at times.

In New York and some other places a system of steam-pipes has been laid through some streets, so that participants can take in, as we do our gas, whatever amount of pressure as may be required, and

regulate it accordingly, a practice which minimises danger of fire.

All over the Union the fire brigades are admirable. I do not know anything more inspiring than to see them work, for the whole force seems everywhere animated by a superb ardour. In New York, Chicago, and I believe San Francisco, the way in which the work is done is quite wonderful. Each city is divided into sections, all communicating with each other. Day and night the staff on duty is ready for instant work.

Let me describe a fire station and its working: It is night; everything is still. The main room of the station is separated from the street by great gates, now shut. In front of the gate as you enter is a large wagon, piled with ladders and all the implements necessary for raising them in the fewest seconds possible. Behind is a fire-engine. A little way back, on each side, are horses tethered in stalls. From the sides of the room brass poles, two inches thick, rise up through circular openings in the ceiling, some three or four feet across, to the room above. One man is writing in a little railed-in desk. No one else is visible. The firemen are asleep in their beds upstairs.

An electric gong sounds.

In a single second everything is changed. The

place becomes instinct with life and action. The same mechanism which strikes the gong releases the horses, who rush into the shafts of the ladder-wagon. The men overhead, waked by the gong, jump from their beds into their big boots, which stand by ready, and actually throw themselves into the room below, sliding down the brass rods. They jump on the escape, where their coats and helmets hang ready for them. The harness of the horses is suspended by strings from the ceilings. One snap of a buckle on the collar of each, and the harnessing is done. The action of taking the reins detaches the supporting strings, which are counter-weighted and disappear ; the gates fly open, and, fully manned and equipped, the rescuing escape rushes on its way.

It is almost incredible till one sees it done ; but commonly, seven seconds after the gong has sounded the fire-escape is at full gallop in the street. The time sometimes is diminished so low as four seconds. Just fancy the value of every second when life is at stake. The men, and even the horses, seem to understand and act.

The fire-engines, too, get out with marvellous rapidity. In the cellars of the station are fixed boilers, in connection with the engines, which are kept filled with boiling water at high pressure. The movement of the engine from its place, by an automatic con-

trivance, cuts off the connection and lights the fire of the boiler, so as to keep up the existing pressure of steam.

Finest of all appliances in this special service is what they call the "Hook and Ladder Company," of which there is one in every station. This is a recent development, and is most successful in saving life in extreme cases. Individual heroism is the active force. There are a number of short ladders, some ten feet long, very light—a single shaft, with crescent-shaped foot-pieces screwed on, and a steel hook at the top, some four feet long, fixed at right angles and serrated on the inside, so as to lay hold of any projection, however small or large. On the outside, at the top, is a small hook, and the fireman has a strong ring in his belt, into which it can be fixed. The company work as follows: From the footpath the fireman holding the latter by the foot throws the hook through the window above, where it catches on the inner edge of the wall. He then runs up the ladder, fixes the ring at his belt in the hook, and is able, with the leverage given by leaning out, to attach a similar ladder, handed to him from below, to the window of the next storey. To this ladder comes another fireman, and so, storey by storey, up they go, a perpetually ascending stream of men and ladders, till they reach the point at which they aim.

Two years ago a case occurred which stamped itself upon my own memory. At the top of a block of residential flats, as high as the Queen Anne's Mansions, a boy was left during a fire. All escape was cut off. No ladder could reach so high, and the stairs were blocked with smoke and flame.

To the rescue the Hook and Ladder Company!

On they came—quiet, agile, resolute, and with the calm coolness that marks the brave. Not a second was lost; for it was a race with flame, and a life the stake. Up they swarmed, up the dizzy heights; the crowd around them silent as death—no sound but the roaring of the flame, the crash and sharp stroke of the engines, and the hissing of the water on the fire. At last the roof was won, only just in time to catch the boy as he fell fainting. You can fancy the roar of the crowd as those heroes came with their burden down that fiery path.

At times the firemen have to work under conditions seemingly impossible. I saw once at St. Louis a house which had been burnt in the night, and the ruins were coated with ice where the water was frozen, almost as it fell. In Chicago I saw the water turn to ice where it touched the wall of a burning house in places where the flames had not yet reached.

Amongst the minor organizations of service are the

messenger service and the signalling system. The messenger system, which exists in nearly every American city, might, I think, be adopted with great advantage here. Thickly studded throughout the city are offices, where there wait a number of boys in uniform, who can be sent when required at a fixed tariff for time or distance. These offices are in communication with livery establishments, and with police and fire-stations, and also with the vast majority of private dwellings—in fact, with every one who will establish a signal in his house. Thus, by ringing an electric bell in a specified manner—one pull, two, three, or four—you can summon to your house a messenger boy, a carriage, a policeman, or a fire brigade.

One of the most marked characteristics of American life is the high regard in which woman is held. It seems, now and then, as if a page of an old book of chivalry had been taken as the text of a social law. Everywhere there is the greatest deference, everywhere a protective spirit. Such a thing as a woman suffering molestation or affront, save at the hands of the criminal classes—which are the same all the world over—is almost unknown, and would be promptly resented by the first man coming along. I think I may fairly say, that from the Canadian lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, or from Sandy Hook to the Golden

Gate, a woman can walk abroad as safely as she can remain at home. In some ways, the idea, which is a noble one, is carried out to a pitch which, to those not accustomed to it, seems at least extreme. Thus, for instance, with regard to banking *queues*. The system of the *queue*, formulated by the French Revolution into a national habit, holds in America. Everywhere the later comer takes his place in turn. Banks, like other establishments, are, by our ideas, generally undermanned, and it is sometimes necessary to wait a little while to be able either to pay in or draw out money. Every man, of course, takes his place in turn and waits; but when a woman comes she at once heads the rank, instead of taking her place in it. A half-grown girl, or a servant-maid, will thus keep waiting, in the busiest hour of the day, men whose minutes are golden.

This protective spirit has, I fancy, much to do with the freedom which women enjoy. By freedom, I mean the relaxing of those petty restraints which, with us, are rather recollections or traditions than social needs, or a logical outcome of the spirit of the age. In the United States a young woman is, almost if not quite, as free to think and act for herself as a young man is. This personal freedom is of course based on a large measure of education, practical as well as of book-learning, and has its correlative in a very stringent

law of personal discretion. I was much struck with this point in relation to suicides. There is not, that I know, any means of forming an exact estimate, but it seemed to me that of the suicides reported in the papers the vast majority were women, mostly young, and with, in every case, a sad, old story behind.

It is, of course, almost impossible to make any accurate statement of the social condition of a country which shows the remarkable fact of a whole population of fifty millions simultaneously moving to a higher social plane. The only written evidence we can have is in the books of etiquette, which, inasmuch as they have to fulfil the requirements of the age, record by inference its social condition. In these "abstract and brief chronicles,"—which are in no wise to be lightly regarded—we find everywhere a strong measure of common sense, and the manifestations of what we might call the "natural laws" of good manners. In these volumes courtesy and good feeling are laid down as axioms, and general laws are evolved. The need of such works is shown in the changing customs of social life. Thus, for instance, in 1860, it was "good form" for a woman to sign herself in a letter *Mrs.* or *Miss*, and custom then countenanced the fashion of "presenting compliments" on formal occasions. In 1885, we learn that the latter form "has been discarded for quite a number of years,"

and that the former method of signature "is everywhere looked upon as a vulgarity."

The natural bridge between social and political life is education; and before we enter upon the latter domain it is well to understand the high place which education holds as a public need. This is, perhaps, best exemplified by the Amendment to the Constitution of the State of Massachusetts, made in 1857 by the necessary majority of its State Senators and two-thirds of the House of Representatives: "No person shall have the right to vote, or be eligible to office under the Constitution of this Commonwealth, who shall not be able to read the Constitution in the English language, and to write his name," &c. It is also shown by the 11th Amendment of the Constitution of Connecticut, in 1855, which requires ability to read as a condition of the suffrage.

Suitable provision is made in nearly every State for public education. In the new States and Territories this is insisted on to a remarkable degree, and with excellent effects. For the purposes of public schools, every sixteenth section of public land is set apart in the States admitted prior to 1848, and every sixteenth and thirty-sixth section of such land in States and Territories since organized, estimated at 1,165,520 acres. Public lands are also set aside for the purposes of seminaries, universities, and agricultural and other

colleges. As the public lands are mapped out into six-mile sections, these again divided into square miles, it can be easily understood what fine provision is made for the educational future. The Report of the Commission of Education for 1882-3 gives the result that out of a school population of, in the United States, 16,243,822, no less than 10,013,826 were enrolled in public schools, the average daily attendance being 6,118,331, the average duration of schooldays varying from 62 to 200 per annum.

I was myself much struck with the condition of education. It was quite a delight to see now and again a lad of seventeen or eighteen years old come into a bookshop to buy a cheap edition of an arithmetic of the higher order, or some equally advanced work in other solid subjects. Sometimes the amount of knowledge shown, where one does not expect it, almost gives a shock to the stranger. For instance, a hackman in Chicago, who was pointing out to me as we drove along the various buildings, showed me one which he specified as a scientific institution.

“What do they teach?” I asked.

He answered, “Oh, every form of scientific knowledge, from pure mathematics to practical engineering!”

In a small place in the West, a journeyman printer,

whom I wanted to do some work in a style somewhat unusual, said :—

“ We can do it if you like, but I assure you it will not be consonant with the traditions of typographic art.”

Not only is there throughout the United States a general educational effort, but, here and there, a tendency is manifested to achieve a high grade in special knowledge. For instance, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a very perfect high school of scientific effort, and the Johns Hopkins' University of Maryland is practically creating a great school of its own, especially in comparative history.

In anything which I may say of politics, I wish it distinctly borne in mind that I use the word purely in the English, and not the American, sense, and in nowise in connection with party strife. In America, the word has fallen very low, and a “ politician ”—unless you hear or know to the contrary—is a man whom it is, perhaps, as well not to trust too much. I prefer to designate those persons who take an active part in the higher Administration as “ statesmen,” so as to avoid any confusion of ideas. An American once told me an incident, which, as it came through such a source, I may, I hope, without offence, repeat. It was to the effect that a stranger, coming to the country in the midst of a local election, asked his host—

“Why is it that you prefer to elect your officials from the criminal classes?”

The reason of the possibility of such a query can be better understood by anyone who has attended a “primary” meeting, where the rowdy element asserts itself.

The Republican form of Government aims at giving freedom of every possible kind. Each sacrifice, therefore, of individual or corporate rights is made to a higher and farther-reaching power. Thus, the National Government has, within the whole area of Republican America, absolute control of the matters entrusted to it by the Constitution of the United States. In this category are all matters of National (or, as we should say, Imperial) interest—taxation and finance, coinage, the regulation of weights and measures, naturalization, laws of bankruptcy, regulation of commerce, foreign policy, Supreme Courts, the postal system, copyright, International law, declaration of war, management of the Army, Navy, and Militia, treaties, protection of Indian tribes, &c.

All matters not specially confided to the National Congress are absolutely controlled by each State in its own way, with certain Constitutional limitations, such as absolute free trade and extradition between State and State, the guarantee of Republican form of government, and the obligation of contracts. The

State, in turn, is sub-divided into Counties, which have absolute self-government in all matters not directly regulated by the Nation or the State. These, again, have sub-divisions, self-controlling for local purposes, where not regulated by higher forms of legislation.

Thus the whole structure of the Republic is cellular, and built up from entities through various minor forms and agglomerations into a compact, cohesive, and structurally perfect mass.

Like all cellular formations, it is a natural growth. Sir Henry Maine, in his recent work on "Popular Government," takes especial pains to show that the Constitution of the United States is not by any means original, but that it is in reality founded on the British Constitution as it existed between 1760 and 1787, modified by the study, on the part of its founders, of the ancient Republics, and the Romano-German Empire.

Mr. Freeman attributes to the fact, that *because* it was not original, as was the constitution of the French Republic founded at the same time, "it lived on, that it has gone through the most frightful of trials, and that it abides, and promises long to abide."

Professor Fiske declares that "the Government of the United States is not the result of special creation, but of evolution," and that "the town-meeting"—

the Teutonic *folk-moot*—"lies at the bottom of all political life of the United States."

Professor Shinn, in a recent most interesting work, shows the influence of mining laws on the development of the country, and consequently on the laws which govern it. He tells how the mining laws, evolved from the experience of miners in ancient Egypt and Phœnicia—in the period of Roman supremacy—in the Hartz Mountains and in Cornwall, were naturally revived in the great mining epoch of 1848-49, and predicts that a century hence "the atmosphere and traditions of the mining camp will linger in the fragments of the miners' jurisprudence which will yet remain firmly embedded in local and State law."

The impression which I think an unprejudiced Englishman must derive from a first knowledge of the American political system, is of the extraordinary perfection of its theory and the elasticity of its working. Naturally, one is more attracted by the machinery of the Federation than with the working of local institutions; and inasmuch as all, or nearly all, the State Constitutions are founded on, and are all in harmony with, the National Constitution, a brief glance at the political system may not be amiss.

There are three great departments of activity under

the Constitution of the United States—the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial. The entire Legislative powers are vested in a Congress, consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The Senate is composed of two members from each State (without regard to its size), chosen by the State Legislatures to serve for six years. Senators must be at least thirty years of age, resident in their State, and have been citizens for nine years. The elections have been, at the beginning, so arranged that every second year one-third of the Senate is renewed.

The House of Representatives is composed of members elected every second year by popular vote, the number for each State being fixed by the census taken every tenth year—every State having, at least one member. By the original Constitution of 1789, the ratio of representation to population was fixed not to exceed 1 in 30,000. The enormous growth of the population is shown by the fact that, whilst the original number of representatives was 65, distributed amongst 13 States, the present representation, although the number is increased to 325, spread over 38 States, only allows of a ratio of one to each 154,325 persons.

The House of Representatives is similar to our House of Commons, and has similar powers, especially

in that only with it fiscal bills can originate. The members are elected to sit each for a district of the State, as it is considered good public policy that they should be in actual touch with their constituents.

All members of Congress, Senators and Representatives alike, are paid an annual salary of \$5,000, or £1,000 sterling. For this they are bound to do duty if required. Provision is made in the Constitution to enable each house to make the necessary laws to carry the idea into effect. As at present working, the Sergeant-at-Arms, at the direction of the House, can arrest absent members and compel their attendance.

The Executive power is vested in the President, elected each fourth year, and who appoints his own cabinet. He is Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, has power to reprieve, appoints ambassadors and judges of the Supreme Court, and can, with the consent of the Senate, make treaties. The President must be native born, at least 35 years of age, and have resided fourteen years within the United States. His manner of election is as follows:—

To form an Electoral College, each State elects representatives to the number of their combined number of Congressmen and Senators. With this College rests the election. Practically, these representatives are chosen as delegates of the contesting political parties, and as each party, through its Con-

vention, decides on one candidate for the Presidential chair, the election is something like a plebiscite, taken State by State.

Thus, in the political system, are several quite different methods of popular representation :—

- (a) The President, chosen by a State plebiscite ;
- (b) The Senate, chosen by the State Legislatures ; and
- (c) The House of Representatives, chosen directly by district suffrage.

Thus there is everywhere a check against undue influence.

It is a popular fallacy that in the United States the principle of universal suffrage holds. It does not, either in theory or in fact. The original Constitution of 1789 simply lays down that “ The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature.” How this is qualified may be seen in the Constitutions of the various States. Thus Massachusetts and Connecticut ordain an educational test. Paupers are disqualified in Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Texas, and West Virginia. Rhode Island requires a property qualification of \$134. Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Georgia exclude non-taxpayers, Tennessee non-payers of poll-tax, and Virginia non-payers of capitation tax. Convicts,

criminals, idiots, insane, bribers, and soldiers of the United States Army are commonly disqualified. Duellists are denied voting power in Florida, Michigan, South Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Other restrictions and enlargements are quite possible. So far as I could gather the national tendency, I am inclined to think that before long the suffrage will—within, of course, wholesome bounds—be somewhat restricted. There is a sort of warning in the Presidential message of December last, which, if carried into law, may deprive of suffrage many present voters, whose sympathies are manifestly alien to the land of their adoption.

I have before alluded to Territories as distinguished from States. A Territory is a State in process of formation. The settlement of the vast area west of the original States, which fringed the Atlantic seaboard, require its being broken into parcels of a size practicable for governing purposes, and necessitates some such embryonic stage. When a Territory has a sufficient population (fixed originally at 5,000), a Governor, Secretary, and Judges are provided, and a Legislative Council of its own inhabitants is selected by Congress. The Territory sends to the House of Representatives one delegate, popularly elected, who has all the power of a Congressman, except the power to vote. When the Territory is properly organised, it

can, by a convention of its people, become, with the consent of Congress, organized as a State, and be received into the Union. Thus provision is made for receiving, in process of time, into the Union new States, to be composed of the Territories now existing, and of others still to be formed out of the wilderness. A provision is reserved in the Constitution for creating new States from States of unwieldy size ; and several of the existing States have thus been formed. In the Act of Congress for the annexation of Texas in 1845, power is reserved of creating out of the existing Republic of Texas four other States, should both that State itself and the United States, at some future time, mutually desire it.

One cannot help being struck with the practical nature of the Americans. The spirit everywhere manifests itself—sometimes in a form quite inconvenient to those who evoke a hostile feeling. In the reform of abuses we can see its quick and ready working. When I was in Cincinnati two years ago a leading lawyer said to me : “ Something will occur here before long, for the administration of justice is at present a farce. There are at present eight murderers in the gaol waiting trial. They were nearly everyone caught red-handed, but I will venture to say that not one of them will be hanged.” A month later a flagrant judicial outrage was perpetrated,

The people suddenly rose and burned down the Court-house and the gaol; the guilty officials had to fly for their lives. Ever since, I understand, the administration of justice in Cincinnati has been unattended with complaint. Again, at the Presidential election a year ago, frauds were suspected in Cook County, Illinois—the county in which Chicago is situated. It was a gigantic evil to grapple with, but a few leading citizens of different political views got together, and formed, by degrees, a committee of a hundred, which they increased to five hundred, and then to a thousand, and commenced an investigation, which resulted in the punishment of more than a hundred election judges. At the same election, a riot, in New York City, was apprehended, which would have been attended with most disastrous consequences. At the election of 1876, Tilden, the Democratic Candidate, had been “counted out,” as it is euphemistically called by Hayes, and the New Yorkers, who send to the Electoral College 36 representatives—the largest number of any State in the Union—were determined not to let any fraud be, on this occasion, perpetrated. The result of the elections should have been known on the evening of Tuesday, 4th November. But the returns were not made, and the suspicions of intended frauds grew with increasing intensity every hour. By the following Friday political feeling was red-hot. I

spent the Friday night amongst the newspaper offices, where reports were coming in every few minutes, and it was everywhere anticipated that if a declaration was not made in the morning there would be fighting in the streets before nightfall.

This strength of feeling will be better understood when we bear in mind that one party advocated Civil Service reform, which President Cleveland is now carrying out, whilst the other took as a watchword "To the victors the spoils," which meant the patronage to every Civil Service post in the United States. In Washington City alone there is quite an army of clerks. The Civil Service of the United States embraces over 100,000 persons, and every post might give an opening for a political job.

In social matters, too, action, when taken to mend abuses, is quick ; two instances I may give. At my first visit to New York, I was taken by the police over the criminal section of the city. I there saw vice in an open form which amazed me, even when I remembered Paris fifteen years ago ; but when I visited New York a year after, there was an almost inconceivable change for the better. Again, a year ago, in Chicago, the manner and quantity of gambling, which was openly allowed, was terrible to think of. The gambling saloons were in leading streets, and were open all night long. I have never seen

anything more pitiful than the workmen's gambling saloons, where every vice that cupidity can suggest was given in *duodecimo*. But within a few months a strong movement shook the system to the dust, and the last I heard was that the gamblers were looking for the hulk of a vessel, which they might moor in the lake, and form a saloon outside the city bounds.

In another way the practical spirit was manifested when the time of day was fixed by an arbitrary division of the country into four parallel sections running north and south—Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Western—the time of each division, going westwards, being an exact hour behind the preceding one. This change from solar to standard time was effected silently and in one day, although, perhaps, touching the habits of a larger number of persons than were directly influenced by the adoption of the Gregorian calendar.

It must not be for an instant imagined that because the Americans are practical they are devoid of sentiment; on the contrary, the national sentiment is as strong as that of any other country I know, and I have never met, in my own experience, a want of sentiment in individuals. The national sentiment may well be strong, for it is but twenty years since a war, which was based on a national sentiment, raged through the land. We never knew

much of that war—the War of the Union—and now that the graves are hidden with the “sweet oblivion of flowers,” we can only know or guess what it was from the dry pages of books and statistics of the ruin which it caused.

In that war, which lasted from 1861 to 1865, nearly a million of men—the flower of the people—were slain in actual battle, or died from diseases acquired ; 6,000,000 of men passed through the hospitals. The Public Debt, which in 1860 was \$64,600,000, swelled between that date and 1867—when the bills were in—to \$2,773,200,000. It has been my good fortune to have met with many men who took part in that terrible war, and their descriptions seemed to open out a whole panorama of thought. In the War of Independence, when England was the foe, the total loss was some 27,000 men ; yet at the battle of Chickamauga (which of us remembers or ever knew the name ?) the loss on both sides was 33,000 men, at Petersburg it was 38,000, at the Wilderness, 49,000, and at Gettysburg 54,000.

My first personal experience of national sentiment was the first time I crossed the Atlantic. Amongst other games we had on board what they call a “tug of war,” where equal numbers at opposite ends of a rope try to draw their opponents across a line. We had some twenty on each side, and the opponents

were England and America. Well, the first time England won; then we tried again. This time we English were pulled right over the line with a rapidity which we could not understand. On investigation, we found that some seventeen persons, chiefly ladies, had joined our opponents, and were aiding in the game; there they stood, with panting bosoms and flashing eyes. I could hardly understand their ardour then. I understood it better later on: when, everywhere in the Northern States—in New England, by the southern shores of the chain of lakes, and in the cities of the Western prairies—I saw the monuments of the dead heroes of that War of the Union; when, on the Southern border, in the track of the great battles, I saw everywhere the new homesteads arisen on the ruins of the old; and when I stood on Arlington Heights, and looked over the broad waters of the Potomac at the splendour of the Federal City of Washington that lay beyond, whilst I wandered in that Campo Santo of the nation's heroes amongst the stretching miles of graves.

In other ways, too, there are evidences of national sentiment. I remember how I was struck when, on Washington's birthday, I came through Boston Common and saw the equestrian statue of the nation's hero rising grimly from the waste of snow, his neck circled

with a wreath of summer flowers. Again, with the touching inscription on the base of the statue to Admiral Farragut, in New York, which tells that the statue was erected "that those who shall come after him and who shall owe him so much, shall see him as he was ever seen by friend and foe." Again, when, as a sort of peaceoffering and emblem of goodwill to the Southern States, Pennsylvania sent to the Exhibition at New Orleans the "Liberty Bell," as it is called, the bell of the old Independence Hall of Philadelphia, where the Declaration was signed. It went through the country, heralded everywhere with joy, brought on its way to the sound of music, and gay with ribbons and flowers.

The correlative of sentiment, humour, is in nowise wanting. There is everywhere, latent or apparent, a strong sense of humour. It is mainly of a dry kind. In Chicago I saw a notice on the side of a house where there was an office in the basement, whose entrance was protected by a balustrade :—

"WANTED.

"A LOAFER TO SIT ON THIS RAIL."

In Fourth Avenue, New York, there is an inscription beside the cigar lighter in a tobacconist's shop :—

"Take care you light it well ; it will save trouble to the Recording Angel."

The spirit of content may be illustrated by the piety of a negro preacher, whose sustenance was entirely reliant on the offertory of his little congregation—the usual method in the coloured churches. The flock did not seem to at all respond to the appeal. The pastor's hat, which served as poor plate, was passed from one to another, but without result. The minister saw that his luxuries for the following week would be *nil*; then that his comforts must be abandoned; and, finally, that the very necessities of life were not forthcoming. The hat was brought to him. He took it by the middle of the crown and held it up and shook it—but nothing came forth. He turned up his eyes and said resignedly:—

“Bress de Lord! Bress de good Lord dat I got back my hat!”

I heard of a Western man who, having come to New York, determined to try that greatest of American luxuries, the canvas-back duck. He went to Delmonico's, the great restaurant in Fifth Avenue, and ordered one. Now, the canvas-back duck is a bird of very considerable *embonpoint*, and has in itself resources in the way of gravy which would have satisfied even the boarders of Mrs. Todgers. The bird is generally lightly cooked. The saying is, that you must carry it through a moderately warm kitchen. When the bird was cut it was brought to

the customer, swimming in red gravy. He looked at it critically.

“Yes,” he said, “yes, that will do very nicely. Just will you, like a good fellow, take it away and kill it.”

One great trait of character is observable—that a joke is taken in good part. Of course, there are nasty people all the world over, who can neither give nor take becomingly; but, in my own experience, I found universally a tolerant good humour and a hearty appreciation of anything which was worthy. As I went through America with my friend, Henry Irving, I had a good opportunity of observing the critical faculty of the people, and I found them everywhere exceedingly fair and unprejudiced, with a remarkable receptivity, and “no allowance”—as the sailors say—in their expression of approval when pleased. I honestly believe that no artist could ask a fairer or better audience, or one before whom he would be content to make his best effort, than is to be found anywhere between Maine and California. Mr. Irving expressed strongly his views on this subject in an article in the *Fortnightly Review*. Miss Ellen Terry must, I fancy, be in doubt as to whether she conquered the country or was conquered by the hospitality and enthusiasm of its people.

One instance of conquering I must mention, for it

touches the fame of a dear friend. It was when Henry Irving gave an address on the "Art of Acting" in Harvard University. It was the first time in the two centuries and a-half of its history that such an honour had been paid in the University to an actor, and it meant a sweeping away of prejudice, which only knowledge of an old Puritan community can make understood. I remember well how proud we, friends and Englishmen, were as we saw before the whole strength and intellect of the University the actor's distinguished face, rising above a sea of heads, whilst in the eloquent inscription\* behind was traced

\* Hic in silvestribus

et incultis locis

Angli domo profugi

Anno post Christum Natum MDCXXXVI.

post Coloniam huc deductam VI.

Sapientiam rati ante omnia colendam

Scholarum publice condiderunt

Conditam Christo et Ecclesiæ dicaverunt

Quæ aucta Johannis Harvard munificentia

a litterarum fautoribus cum nostratibus tum externis

identidem adjuta

Alumnorum denique fidei commissa

ab exiguis perducta initiis ad majora rerum incrementa

præsidum sociorum inspectorum senatus academici

consiliis et prudentia et cura

optimas artes virtutes publicas privatas

coluit colit

"Qui antem docti fuerint fulgebunt quasi splendor firmamente

et qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos

quasi stellæ in perpetuas æternitates."

the story of Englishmen who, flying from intolerance,

had found a home in the leafy wilderness. Truly the tide of prejudice of the centuries had rolled back, and the Old World and the New, each working out its destiny, had met on common ground, and from every side the old intolerance was a thing of the past.

There is no doubt whatever that there is throughout America a widespread tolerance. Surely it is a noble substratum on which to build the temple of a nation's greatness. Its spirit has become written law in nearly all the State Constitutions. That the Nation has not risen from or sunk to indifference in religious matters—wherein is the gauge of toleration—is shown in the fact that in the States, which have in their Bill of Rights proclaimed freedom of worship, provision is made by purely voluntary effort for the accommodation of the people. Thus in Vermont and Ohio—both of which proclaim religion of all kinds free—the number of seats provided in the various places of worship is equal to the number of the entire population over ten years of age. We do not, I understand, nearly arrive at a similar result in the United Kingdom, in England, or even in London.

My feeling of the sentiment, and my experience of the working of the institutions of the United States, satisfies me that in future developments, of country,

or of race, or of policies which are to sway the world, we need never fear the developments of Popular Government. I mention this, not in any party spirit, but because my attention was called to it by what seems to me the imperfect conclusions of Sir Henry Maine, based on an examination of the working of the American Constitution.

Lastly, I took away with me from the shores of America a feeling of love and gratitude towards its people, and one of joy that England's first-born child has arrived at so noble a stature.

We have not, all the world through, so strong an ally, so close a friend. America has got over her childhood. The day of petty jealousy has gone by. Columbia is strong enough in her knowledge of her own power and beauty to sail, unruffled and unawed, into the salon of old Time amidst the queens of the world. There is every reason we can think of why the English on both sides of the Atlantic should hold together as one. Our history is their history—our fame is their pride—their progress is our glory. They are bound to us, and we to them, by every tie of love and sympathy; on our side, by the bright hopes of parents who send their children to seek fortune in the Sunset Land; on theirs, by the old remembrances of home and common kin, and by the memories of their buried dead. We are bound

each to each by the instinct of a common race, which makes brotherhood and the love of brothers a natural law ; a law which existed at the first, and which, after the lapse of a century, still exists—whose tenets were never broken, even by the shocks of war, and whose keen perception was never dimmed in the wilderness of stormy sea between.

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